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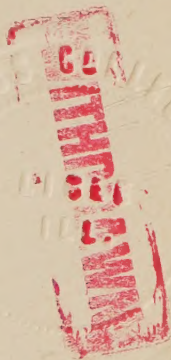
BY

WILHELMINE VON HILLERN

Literally Translated

by

Vivian Elsie Lyon



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PREFACE

The author of "Höher als die Kirche" is Wilhelmine von Hillern, the widely known German novelist. She was the only daughter of Frau Birch-Pfeiffer, herself a talented actress and playwright. "Minna" was born in Munich, March 11, 1836, and at the age of seventeen was described as being "not altogether peaceable" and "fire-flashing," but also very gifted. In her early life she followed in the footsteps of her mother, becoming an actress at Coburg. She left the stage upon her marriage to Hof- und Kriegsgerichtsdirektor von Hillern, and, after her husband's death, devoted her time to writing, at Oberammergau. "Geier Wally" has been the most successful of her novels and has been circulated through Europe and America in numerous languages and at least six editions. Others of her novels are: "Doppel-leben," "Ein Arzt der Seele," "Die Friedhofsblume," and "Sie kommt doch." Her efforts as a dramatist were unsuccessful, but several of her novels have been arranged for the stage. "Höher als die Kirche" is a wholesome, well-rounded

story of the life of Hans Liefrink, a wood-carver and artist, and his struggles for recognition in the conservative old town of Breisach, and his ultimate triumph over the brusque councilman Ruppacher. It was one of the stories recommended in the "Report of the Committee of Twelve" and is widely read.

It may not be amiss, just here, to speak of the two great men who influenced Hans' career most strongly—his beloved Kaiser, Maximilian the First, for whom the rose tree was named, and his master, Albrecht Dürer, the famous painter and engraver.

Maximilian was born in 1459. At the age of twenty-seven he was elected king of the Romans, and seven years later succeeded his father as emperor. His marriage to the daughter of Charles the Bold involved him in a war with Louis XI of France in which he was successful. He is the hero of the epic poem, "Der letzte Ritter," which established the reputation of Count Anton Alexander von Auersperg, the "Anastasius Grün" mentioned in the first chapter of our story. Maximilian's death occurred at Wels, Upper Austria, January 12, 1519, which event fixes the date of the scene under the rose tree and Hans' departure for Nuremberg and Albrecht Dürer.

Dürer was one of the greatest of mediæval artists, and may well be called the "father" of modern art, for he was the first to teach the rules of perspective. What wonder, then, that Hans, with his contempt for "plaques," in which "you don't know what is close and what is far away," should go to him for instruction! Dürer lived between the years 1471 and 1528. His apprenticeship was spent with Michael Wolgemut, and, at its end, he started upon the customary "Wanderjahre" of German youths, during which time he gained much in experience and had practice in metal engraving at Colmar. His ambition was to "delineate forms, with stern accuracy, by means of accented outline and curved shadings." He was appointed court painter by Maximilian I and retained that position under Charles V. His masterpiece was a drawing of Orpheus. Such was the man who directed the innate talents of our hero.

It was with eagerness that I began my work of translating "*Höher als die Kirche*." This tale of Old Breisach, with its "rose fragrance and its pious simplicity" became one of my favorites when I first read it in my high school course, and its charm for me has never since been diminished.

Old Breisach itself, with its centuries of history, is a most fascinating study. In the days before the Christian era it was the stronghold of the Sequani, and in "Cæsar's Commentaries" we read of it as the "Mons Brisiacus" which was captured by Ariovistus. The "mountain," 804 feet high, is an isolated eminence on the west side of the Rhine and was regarded as the key to western Germany. In the year 369 it was fortified by Valentian to defend the Rhine against the Germans, was called the "Kissen" (pillow) of the empire and remained one of its chief fortresses till the middle of the eighteenth century. It changed hands constantly until 1805, being then incorporated with Baden. In the Franco-Prussian War it was bombarded from New Breisach, which lies on the opposite side of the Rhine, the two being connected by a railroad bridge. The famous Cathedral of Old Breisach dates back to the thirteenth century, some say even to the tenth, and is remarkable for its rich decorations, especially the carving of the high altar. Who can contemplate this venerable spot without a feeling of awe? Who, knowing the story of Hans and Maili, could be so devoid of imagination as to gaze, unmoved, at the wonderful altar? If there be any such, I am not numbered among them.

PREFACE

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One of my most cherished day dreams has been to attend mass in that historic Minster, and to see with my own eyes the masterpiece of Hans Liefrink which brought him his bride.

If this English version of "Höher als die Kirche" can infuse into others some of my own enthusiastic interest, I shall feel well repaid.

“With cunning hand and such deep art,
It seemed the stone to life would start.”
—*Goethe.*

HIGHER THAN THE CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

MANY of my friendly readers, no doubt, have journeyed into Switzerland through lovely Breisgau, and have followed with delight the soft lines of our Kaiserstuhl, and the Vosges, veiled in blue haze, which now are ours again. You have also surely heard, not without interest, how the horrors of the war whirled even to the spurs of the Black Forest, and kindled the bitter fight around New Breisach, starting from the little, quiet city of Old Breisach, the other side of the Kaiserstuhl.—Therefore it will perhaps interest my friendly readers to hear an unassuming story from Old Breisach's past, which winds around the old city on the upper Rhine, like a poetic arabesque.

It returned to my mind, long after I had forgotten it, as I stood one cold winter night on the heights of our castle eminence, watching the bombardment of Ft.

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Mortier. It was a wild and uncanny night. The storm fairly shook the top of the mountain, and seemed to wish to tear the cloaks from our bodies; even the last curious spectator had disappeared, and there was no one near me, far and wide, except the maid whom I had brought with me as an escort, and my true protector, a large dog, who growled and barked at every fresh blast and roar of the wind, every rustle in the foliage. Another dog, far below at the foot of the mountain, was aroused by his shrill voice and answered with a mournful howl that rang dismally through the stillness.

"Whenever a dog howls, somebody dies," remarked my companion, shuddering.

"Down there, doubtless enough people will die," I said, and gazed over the broad, dark valley, where, behind the Kaiserstuhl, a red flame rose and fell—the burning of New Breisach. Heavy snow clouds dimmed the moon and the crimson glare contrasted all the more sharply with the black background. At regular intervals the shells flew up at the horizon like fireballs, and, with the quickness of thought, traced their courses in wide curves; and whenever they fell into the conflagration, the dying glow would burst

forth anew, and heavily and slowly that wonderful thunder of artillery, which, once heard, is never forgotten, would follow the flash—those majestic, heavy blows, with which the great “Smith of Sedan” was breaking up an ancient empire and welding together a new one. Those on the other side did not fail to reply each time, and back and forth roared the mighty blows, inexorably crushing out men’s work and men’s lives, and the flames of New Breisach illuminated the fearful scene like a forge fire.

Far below, at our feet, the city of Freiburg lay as in an anxious dream, with its scattered, faintly gleaming lights. The windows, however, were dark; the city had closed its eyes. Like a black mother swan, who has gathered her cygnets about her, the mighty Cathedral, with its slender tower, rested in the midst of the low houses of the market place, which in the darkness seemed to hide away like goslings under its wings. It struck twelve from the spire projecting towards us, and on all sides larger and smaller clocks carried the message that one anxious day of those hard times was done, and another, perhaps still more anxious one, beginning. Deathly silence hovered over the slumbering city, while so near, behind our mountains, de-

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struction raged. The foreboding howl of the watchdog continually reached us, and the roaring storm, together with the cannons' thunder, sang a powerful, gloomy chant of battle and distress.

"If only they do not batter down the Minster," said my companion. "They say that the French are aiming at it to-night."

The Minster—the venerable Breisach Minster with its Gothic towers, its pious legends, its silver and gold monstrances of incomparable workmanship, and its masterpiece of woodcarving, which has few equals.

And suddenly the sombre winter night, with its alarm of battle, had sunk down before my eyes as if by magic, and I stood in Breisach, on the Cathedral Square, looking out from that stately elevation far into the laughing green plain of the Rhine, over towards France, our then quiet neighbor, but one who had threatened in so many a battle this "Pillow of the Holy Roman Empire," as Breisach was called in times past. The Cathedral, gray with age, lay there before me in its proud calm, and arching over it was a sunny blue sky. At the foot of the mountain, up which the little city picturesquely ascended to the Cathedral, flowed the green German Rhine,

broad and majestic; and if I bent over the low parapet I could look directly into the narrow streets with their innocent activity, as into a child's toy city. I wandered farther upon the soft green sod around the Minster. A few tardy old women panted up the mountain with hymnals and rosaries, and out of the open church door came the odor of incense, mingling with the fragrance of the blooming lilacs. The service bell rang, the cock chafers hummed, and the children, in their countrified Sunday clothes, tumbled around in the grass, as yet untroubled about the salvation of their souls, for which their mothers were praying within the church. Even the Minster idiot, who was always stretching out his cap to strangers, had on his best coat, for it was Sunday, and a sun day in the truest sense of the word. Through the open curve of the colonnade the green waves of the stream shimmered so brightly that one could scarce bear his eyes upon it, and the French sentinel, beyond the pontoon bridge which still bound Old and New Breisach together, shaded his eyes with his hand.

I took refuge in the shadows behind the church, to wait for the service to end. There it was so still and cool and so peaceful that it reminded me of the beautiful

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words of Ekkehard: "Behind the church the blue flower of contentment blooms." Within, the mysterious ringing of the sanctus bell announced the great marvel of the consecration; the faithful sank silently to their knees with faces covered, before the incarnate God—a second stroke—a third—now God had passed by them and they could rise, newly strengthened and revived, touched by the divine body.

I looked in at one of the high windows. A direct sunbeam fell upon the magnificently-carved altar, whereon God, Father and Son, grandly sublime in bearing and surrounded by a host of jubilant angels, were crowning the Most Blessed Virgin as Queen of Heaven. With the flow and flexibility of thought the intractable hard wood seemed to have taken form under the hand of the master. In such a hand magic must dwell, the all-conquering magic of creative genius!

When the mass was ended, and the worshippers had again descended the steep mountain in the summer heat, I entered the cool, stone house, which was still filled with bluish, fragrant clouds. High above my head the top of the altar was gracefully bent under the arch of the church, like a flowery vine, which, having sprung up too high, must bow under the roof of

the hot house. I love such sublimity, which reaches far beyond its imposed boundaries, yet knows how to submit to them at the proper time. Upon my questioning the sexton regarding the creator of this splendid work, he related to me the simple artist's legend, which is connected with its origin. I repeat it as I heard it, but should my fancy paint with somewhat livelier colors than tradition, may it be forgiven me, since I assume no responsibility for the truth of my tale.

CHAPTER I

THE KNIFE

It was in the year of grace 1511. Two manly forms were walking with stately tread across the grass of the quiet Cathedral Square. The one, somewhat older, with finely curved nose, full blonde beard, and long locks which fell abundantly from under the red velvet cap, stepped along so majestically that at the first glance, one saw that he was no ordinary mortal, but one upon whose broad shoulders rested an invisible globe. Handsome, tall and noble, as one imagines the height of manhood, an emperor, a German emperor, from head to foot—at once a poet and a hero in the true sense of the word, Anastasius Grün's "Letzter Ritter"—Maximilian the First.

Here in Breisach, "his city," as he called it, the emperor liked to rest from the quarrels that were stirring him, and with him the world; here in this profound stillness and quiet he worked at his "Weissenkunicg"; here he wrote those tender letters

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to his daughter Margaretha in the Netherlands. That little city on the upper Rhine, now so forgotten and unnoticed—it was the “Sans Souci” of Emperor Maximilian. But during the year 1511, threatening clouds lowered over this “Ohne Sorge,” clouds which shadowed the brow of the emperor and announced a storm which was destined to drive him onward, away forever from that still spot of earth which he loved so well. Here and there within his own kingdom the flames of the peasant war were already gleaming under the ashes, and, without, there was again a hostile movement among those malicious, volcanic people—the loss of Milan was threatening, and that old dragon, the Turk, was rising again in the distance—it was almost too much, even for an emperor. So he walked with proud but heavy steps over to the parapet, and his gaze hung sadly on the cheerful landscape at his feet. To-day the invisible globe pressed more heavily than ever on his shoulders. Presently he stopped.

“What children are those?” he asked the gentleman following him, the noble Sir Marx Treitzsauerwein, his private secretary, and pointed to a couple of children who with great zeal were planting a young rose tree in a niche of the wall. Such beau-

tiful children only the fancy of an artist could conceive. A girl and a boy, the former about eight, and the latter twelve years of age. The little ones were so engrossed in their work that they did not hear the emperor coming. Not until he stood directly before them, did they rise, and then the boy nudged the little maid, and said quite loudly, "Say, that is the Kaiser."

"What are you doing there?" asked Maximilian, and his artist eye feasted on the charming pair.

"We are setting out a rose bush to the dear God," said the boy, unabashed.

"Do you think that the dear God will like that?"

The boy shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, we haven't anything any better."

The Kaiser laughed.

"In that case, He will surely take the will for the deed. What is your name, then?"

"Hans Liefrink."

"And the little girl. Is she your sister?"

"No, that is Ruppacher's Marie, my neighbor. Pshaw, Maili, take your apron out of your mouth!"

"Oh, yes. Well, then you like each other, of course?"

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"Yes, when I am big, and have a knife, I'm going to marry her."

The Kaiser opened his eyes wide with surprise.

"Does one need a knife to get married?" he asked.

"Why, surely," answered Hans earnestly. "If I don't have a knife, I can't cut, and if I can't cut, I can't earn any money, and mother says you can't get married without money, and I must have a lot if I want Marie, for she is a councillor's daughter."

"But," asked the Kaiser further, "what do you want to cut?"

"Wood."

"Aha, I understand. You want to be a woodcarver. Now I remember that once in Nuremberg I saw two young fellows of your name at Dürer's. Are they relatives?"

"Yes, cousins."

"Did your fathers practice this art?"

"Yes, and I watched when I was little and now I want to learn it, too, but my father and uncle are dead, and my mother doesn't buy me a knife."

The Kaiser put his hand in pocket and drew out a knife, with an artistic handle and many blades.

"Will this do?"

A hot flush of rapture rose into the boy's face. One could see the quick beating of his heart through the rough, torn little shirt.

"Why, yes, surely," he stammered. "That would be fine."

"Then take it, and be industrious with it," said the emperor.

The child took the treasure as cautiously as if it were glowing hot and might burn his fingers.

"Thank you" was all that he could utter, but in his dark eyes flashed a bright glow of joy, which covered the Kaiser as with a glittering shower of love and gratitude.

"Will you not go to your cousins at Nuremberg and help them carve plaques? There is a great deal of work there."

"I would like to go to Nuremberg, of course, but I will not carve plaques. I cannot bear plaques. They are so flat that you can rub your hand right over them, and so mixed up that you don't know what is close and what is far away, and you have to imagine half of it. I like to carve figures much better. They look more natural and you can take hold of them."

"'You can take hold of them,' " repeated the Kaiser, smiling. "The true sculptor! You are quite a fellow, Hans Liefrink.

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But you are right. Keep to that which is natural and which one can 'take hold of'—then you will not fail!"

He drew a leather purse out of his velvet riding jacket and gave it to the boy.

"Pay attention, Hans. Keep the gold florins that are in this; give them to no one, not even to your mother; tell her that the Kaiser has commanded you to spend them only for your education. Learn well, and when you are larger and can travel, go to Dürer at Nuremberg, take my greetings to him, and tell him that, as his Kaiser once held the ladder for him, so he is to hold the ladder for you, in order that you may be able to rise high in the world. Will you shake hands on it?"

"Yes, sire," cried Hans, inspired, grasped the imperial right hand and shook it heartily in his great delight.

"Your majesty," he burst out, "if I ever carve the dear God, I'll make Him like you—He must look just like you."

"Take care of yourself," laughed the Kaiser, and, with his companion, climbed down the mountain. The boy stood there as if he were in a dream. Maili meanwhile, in spite of the prohibition, had sucked a hole in her apron, and stood, as if petrified, with the wet edge in her hand. Then she

ran toward a maid, who, scolding, came to seek her, and whispered to her:

“Just think! The Kaiser was here and gave Hans a knife and a lot of florins.”

The maid would not believe it, but when she saw the knife—she was not permitted to touch it—then she *had* to believe it, and she called the people together all the way down the hill, and every one wanted to see the knife and the contents of the purse, but the wily boy did not show the latter to any one.

The next day the Kaiser went away, and the story of Hans Liefrink was town talk for weeks.

“Truly it was no wonder. Hans Liefrink was always a bold youngster, and talked overmuch—why should he not have talked himself into the good graces of even a Kaiser?”

CHAPTER II

UNDER THE KAISER-TREE

YEARS have passed since then. Hans Liefrink lost his mother, Maili hers, and more and more the desolate children clung to each other. Evenings, when the father talked politics on the honor bench in the tavern, and the housekeeper chattered with the neighbors by the door, then the children climbed over the hedge, which separated the gardens behind the houses, and sat together, while Hans cut for Maili beautiful playthings and little figures, such as no child had in all Breisach. He told her all that he knew of the beautiful pictures and carvings which he had seen in the Cathedral at Freiburg and of the great masters of his art, Baldung Grün in Freiburg, and Martin Schön in Colmar; for now he often went here and there wherever there was something to see and to learn, and he studied untiringly. For hours at a time they sat there and shared their small knowledge. Whenever they could, they ran up to the Cathedral and

watered their rosebush which Hans had christened "the Kaiser-tree." There they liked to linger the best, for they always thought that the Kaiser must sometime return and stand before them up there as he had the first time. Often they would call out loudly, "Oh, Kaiser, oh, Kaiser! Come again!" But the childish voices died away unheard in the wide, wide world, where the one they longed for was struggling in the loud tumult of battle. The children waited in vain, the Kaiser did not come again.

So the little ones grew, and the Kaiser-tree grew with them; and, as if the tender threads of the unconscious love in their hearts had interwoven and intertwined themselves with the roots of the little tree, something drew the youth and maiden again and again to the rosebush in the niche and they met there day by day. The little tree was like a true friend which clasped their hands in his own and held them fast. Unfortunately, the true friend was not strong enough to outwardly hold together what men were trying to separate. The beautiful, stately Fräulein Ruppacher, the highly respected councilor's daughter, was permitted no longer to associate with the poor woodcarver. Her father forbade it one day in the strongest

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terms, for Hans Liefrink was not only poor, he was not even the child of a citizen of Breisach. His family were Netherlanders and had migrated into Breisach. A foreigner, and a poor foreigner besides, was, in those times, a sort of Pariah, and could not be fitted into the narrow, rusted groove of ancient custom. Hans did not even pursue a legitimate craft—he would be an artist—that was then as much as a cutpurse, a vagabond, a wizard who seduces honest folk by magic potions and incantations; and he was just the sort of a man of whom one might expect such hocus pocus. Wherever he went, he made such an impression on the maidens that they stood still and gazed after him. He had locks like chestnut brown silk and his dark eyes also had something peculiar about them—what, no one could say; they fairly held spellbound those with whom he was speaking. Neither did any one know what he was making. He had bought for himself the little house in which he lived, and after his mother's death he occupied it entirely alone. No one had ever gone in or out except the famous, and therefore infamous, sculptor, Jacob Schmidt, who had killed a citizen of Breisach one day in a duel, and had been forced to flee. People even said that Hans had helped him in his

flight, and since then he had been in very bad repute. His proud neighbor, Rupacher, to whom the faithful playmate of his daughter had long been a thorn in the flesh, caused a high wall to be erected between his own and Hans' garden, so that the young people could meet no more, except by the Kaiser-tree, and even there very seldom, when it was still and deserted up there. This very obstacle swelled the quietly flowing stream of unconscious love in the young hearts, until it surged over their lips.

One evening, after Maili had not come to the rose tree for a long time, Hans sang under her window, which opened into the garden, his first love song.

“A-hanging on the rose tree,
 I left my tortured heart.
 If thou dost pass the rose tree,
 Wilt pluck it, heal its smart?

Full many a luscious, savory fruit,
 The loaded fruit trees bear.
 But hast thou ever seen a tree
 Producing fruit so rare?

My sweetheart, come! Oh, leave it not
 There 'neath the sun's hot ray
 To fade and droop and, finally,
 To wither and decay!”

And she did come the very next day, and took the heart down and laid it upon her own, and blushingly swore never to let it go. It was a moment of such bliss that Hans cried aloud, "Oh, if only the Kaiser would come now!" as if he grudged this hour to himself alone, and as if only an emperor could share it! But the Kaiser did not come again, so Hans cut with the sacred knife that he had received from that exalted hand the letters M and H in the bark of the rose tree, and a small imperial crown over them. That stood for "Marie, Hans, and Kaiser Maximilian."

Autumn passed and winter came. They saw each other more and more seldom, and oftener and oftener Hans sang his song of the rose thorn, and many another as well, until Ruppacher one day discovered it and threatened the girl with curse and repudiation if she did not give up the "scamp."

So one evening the young people stood for the last time under the rose tree, which they had planted eight years before; he, a twenty-year-old, handsome youth, she a bud of sixteen summers. It was a mild February day, such as are common in the south. The snow had melted, and a gentle breeze swayed the still brown, thorny branches of the bush. She stood with

downcast head before him. She had told him everything that she had been obliged to bear, and now she was silent. Her hand rested in his, and great tears ran down over her cheeks.

"Maili," said the young man, with deep pain, "after all you don't believe that I am such a bad man, do you?"

Then she raised her blue madonna eyes directly to his, a beautiful smile glided over her face.

"No, Hans, never. No one can make me think ill of you. They do not all know you. I, however, do know you. You have brought me up and taught me to know what is beautiful and great,—something the others do not understand. You have made me what I am, just as your artful hand forms a figure from a piece of wood," and she took his strong, hard hand and pressed it gently to her soft, warm lips. He permitted it gladly, for the people of that time knew nothing of the etiquette of our day, and she folded her tender fingers over his and spoke further:

"I will believe in you always, for you glorify God with your art, and whoever does that in word or picture, cannot be bad."

"And will you be true to me, Maili, until I have brought fame to myself and

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my art, and can come, as an honored man, to woo you?"

"Yes, Hans. I will never set my foot out of my father's house, except to you—or into the cloister; and if I die before you come, I will be buried here under the Kaiser-tree, where we have been so happy. And you will come, won't you? and rest here from your weariness and labor, and every rose petal that falls upon you shall remind you, as if it were a kiss from me."

She sank in tears on the young man's breast. The two heavy hearts beat hotly against each other in the pain of parting, and in the heart of the rose tree there was a welling up like the first anticipation and budding of the spring time.

"Do not cry, Maili," said Hans, finally, rousing himself.

"Everything will yet be well. I am going to Dürer, as the Kaiser commanded, and I will learn much from him; and when I can accomplish something worth while, I will seek out the Kaiser, wherever he may be, lay my proposal before him and beg him to intercede with your father."

"Oh, yes, the Kaiser," cried Maili. "Oh, if he would only come again, he would help us."

"He will surely come again, my love," said Hans confidently. "We will pray

that the dear God may lead him to us, or me to him.”

They both knelt in the damp, cold grass, and it seemed to them that God would perform a miracle and change the Kaiser-tree before them into the Kaiser himself.

There—what was that? The great bell of the Cathedral was tolling—slowly, solemnly, deeply sad.

The lovers looked up.

“What is that—is there a fire—are the enemies coming?” They had a presentiment of heavy misfortune.

Now people were ascending the mountain, wishing to enter the church. Hans hastened towards them to learn what the trouble was, while Maili concealed herself in the colonnade.

“Where do you keep yourself, then, that you know nothing?” screamed the people. “It has just been announced in the market place. The Kaiser is dead!”

The Kaiser was dead! There stood Hans, thunderstruck, all his hopes shattered at one blow; and as it became still and deserted again on the square, he sat down on the bench, leaned his forehead in heartbreaking sorrow on the slender stalk of the rose tree, and sobbed aloud, “Oh, my Kaiser, my dear good Kaiser, why have you died?”

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A hand was softly laid on his shoulder. Maili stood beside him.

It was growing dark, and only from the watery mirror of the Rhine there still glimmered a faint reflection of the last sun rays. The bell had ceased ringing, the brazen elegy had died away, and it was so still and deathlike in Nature round about that it seemed it never could be spring again.

"But *God* is there, and *He* does not forsake us," replied Maili, and her blue eyes shone through the twilight like twin stars banished from heaven, which were longing to be back in their homeland.

As Hans saw her thus, standing before him in her maidenly purity and humility, with arms crossed over her breast, a great joy lighted his countenance, and he reverently folded his hands.

"*Mary!*" he whispered. "No, God does not forsake us. He reveals to me in this moment His Queen of Heaven. If I should succeed in reproducing that which I now see before me, then I shall indeed be an artist who will need the help of no Kaiser."

At daybreak the next morning Hans stepped out of his door, equipped for travelling, a knapsack on his back and on his breast the leather purse containing the

remnant of the gold florins, received from Emperor Maximilian. He locked the little house, put the key in his pocket, and walked slowly away. Loud and clear, his full voice resounded once more,

“A-hanging on the rose thorn,
I left my tortured heart——”

One of the low, leaded windows in Rupacher's house opened softly, and a little white handkerchief waved a silent farewell through the dim light. Then it seemed as if the voice broke into tears, and it went on, trembling and uncertain,

“Full many a luscious, savory fruit,
The loaded fruit trees bear.
But hast thou ever seen a tree——”

Then the song ceased. Emotion had overcome the departing one and only his firm tread and the tap of his staff were heard in the street.

CHAPTER III

NO PROPHET IN HIS OWN COUNTRY

YEAR after year elapsed. Hans Liefrink had disappeared. He was thought of only when the closed cottage with the darkened windows was passed. Who had the nearest right to it, no one knew.

There was one, however, who thought of him continually and hoped and waited with the longing of one betrothed. No entreaty, no threat, no chiding of her father could induce Marie Ruppacher to give ear to one of her many suitors. She never left the house except to go to church, and, every evening after vespers, she watered the Kaiser-tree, so that it might grow stately and rejoice the heart of her true love, whenever he should come. It was the only thing that she had in common with him; he had planted it with her, had loved it with her—she tended the little tree with double solicitude, as a mother cares for the child of a distant husband, in order that he may find it large and strong upon his return; and the little tree grew

and flourished. Already it was as high as the niche in which it stood, and had started to jut out over it, but she bent it back into its niche and bound it fast to the wall, so that its blooming top was forced to bend under the arch.

This simple task was her only joy, her only refreshment. Her days were filled with work and prayer, but her fresh cheeks began to pale. Her father saw, without sympathy, how his beautiful child became sadder and more silent, and how she slowly faded. It was fortunate for her that the opening struggles of the Reformation, which threatened even Breisach, took Ruppacher into the high council more and more, and did not allow him to carry out his intention of marrying off Marie by force.

The storms around Breisach drew nearer, the peasants of the Kaiserstuhl were in arms for the new learning, and more and more adherents joined them. The city trembled for its old beliefs and while they were fortifying themselves outwardly and were putting themselves in a state of defense, the Archduke Ferdinand, grandson of Kaiser Maximilian, advised them to do inwardly everything that could strengthen and fortify the ancient faith. Every one did his part in a pious spirit

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of sacrifice; foundations and gifts were made for the elevation of the authority of the clergy, for the increase and improvement of the divine services, and finally for the glorification of the ideal forms of the Catholic religion, through painting and sculpture, in the church building itself. For a long time a worthy high altar had been lacking; in a time like this, such a lack must certainly be supplied, and it was resolved to have a work produced which would bring, visibly, before the eyes of the wavering spirits, the whole heavenly glory.

A proclamation was issued to the German artists; they were to send in drawings and proposals for the work, and to him who presented the best, the execution of the same would be entrusted. Marie did not hear much of all this, for she did not now mingle with the people, who already with wagging heads, were calling her the "Bride of Heaven." She lived alone in her little attic room, and more and more troubled grew the look which she raised to the wooden crucifix, carved for her by Hans in happier days. It was going into the fifth year since Hans had sent her tidings of himself. To be sure, he dared not write her, and friends in Breisach he had none; but such uncertainty preys on the life. Marie was tired not of the

vain waiting, but *by* the vain waiting—tired unto death.

One evening she sat down and began to compose her will. Her father was at a meeting of the council, so she was alone and undisturbed.

“When I am dead,” she wrote, “I beg that I may be buried, up by the Cathedral, under the rose tree which I, as a child, dedicated to the dear God. Should Hans Liefrink ever return, I beg——”

“If thou dost pass the rose thorn,
Wilt pluck it——”

sounded suddenly, but softly, very softly, under her window.

A star falls no more quickly from heaven, a bud springs up no more rapidly, than the maiden, at this call, sprang to the window, and with trembling voice repeated the final lines.

“My sweetheart, come! Oh, leave it not,”

was the answer from under the wall—and the parchment, with the unfinished testament, pen and ink—everything flew into the chest. The girl, however, like a bird loosed from its cage, flew up the mountain without looking around, as if afraid that

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the happiness which followed her would disappear if she turned, and another than the longed-for-one would stand behind her. Steps, becoming quicker, ever quicker, came towards her. She paused breathless, and with beating heart, by the Kaiser-tree, and at the same instant two arms embraced her, and her senses left her. It seemed to her that the floods of the Rhine rose, roaring, up the mountain, and poured over her, and dashed her down with them, and she clung to her strong support in order not to sink into the unfathomable depths. Then she knew nothing more; she lay pale and unconscious on her loved one's breast.

Fortunately there was no one along the way and when Maili regained consciousness, Hans was sitting on the bench and holding her tenderly upon his knees, rubbing her temples and hands, and breathing the warm breath of his life and love upon her. Long, long they remained in a silent embrace, for genuine, true love does not speak, it kisses first.

"My true love," said Hans finally, "you have become so pale, are you ill?"

She shook her head with a blissful little smile.

"No, not now, surely not now. But you remained away so long. Could you not have come sooner?"

“No, my love, I could not. If I had come as a poor unknown fellow, would not your father have driven me again from your threshold with insult and shame? We would have seen each other, only to be parted a second time. So I have stayed away as long as my apprenticeship lasted, until I could say to myself, ‘Now you may woo the beautiful and distinguished Fräulein Ruppacher.’ I have seen the world and educated my eye with all the art treasures of the great cities, and I have been with Dürer, have been a co-worker in his studio, and my name is spoken with honor among his pupils.”

“Oh, Hans, do you really believe that my father will relent?” said Marie anxiously.

“Yes, Maili, it cannot fail. I heard in Nuremberg that the magistrate, at last, desires to have a new high altar made for the Cathedral. I have hastened hither, to compete for it, and if I am found worthy to create such a work—what reason then can your father have to oppose me?”

Maili shook her head hopelessly, but Hans was full of assurance.

“Look, the old Kaiser-tree, how it has grown,” he cried wonderingly. “You have tended it well. It looks as if it sucked into itself all the fresh red blood that has dis-

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appeared from your cheeks, sweetheart, so purple are the roses. Give back my sweetheart's blood, you thief," he joked happily, broke off a handful of roses and gently stroked Maili's cheeks with them as if he would paint them, but they remained white.

"That doesn't help, but perhaps this will?" and he kissed her. "There, that is a better paint," he laughed, and pressed the maiden's blushing face to his breast in overflowing joy.

"Bloom on, my little rose, bloom on. The spring is coming."

A half hour later the council servant timidly entered the session hall of the high gabled Breisach council house.

"I entreat pardon from the honorable council," he begged, "but there is one outside who urgently desires to be brought before the honorable council."

"Who is it?" asked the burgomaster.

"It is Hans Liefrink," answered the servant, "but beautifully dressed—I scarcely would have known him."

That was a surprise!

"Hans Liefrink, the deserter, the vagabond, who fled by night, God knows whither, and who has wandered around for years, God knows where? What does he want?"

“He wishes to compete for the high altar, and to submit his drawings.”

“What, waste our time with such a scamp, who has never accomplished anything but what any cobbler could?” screamed Councilman Ruppacher, and the other honorable gentlemen agreed with him.

“He must begone, whence he came,” was the final verdict. “Such a piece of work cannot be entrusted to any stray bungler, of whose ability no one has ever heard.”

The good-natured servant, troubled by the rough decision, left the room; but almost immediately he returned, and with a thousand bows, brought in a portfolio.

“Liefrink will not have it otherwise than that the honorable gentlemen shall examine his drawings—and if the august gentlemen do not know what Hans Liefrink is able to do, they may enquire of Dürer in Nuremberg—he will tell them.”

“If the fellow does not take himself off soon,” shouted Councilman Ruppacher, “we will have him removed by the beadle.”

“Softly, softly, Master Ruppacher,” said the burgomaster, a quiet man who had in the meantime opened the portfolio. “The drawing, after all, does not appear so bad to me. It is the coronation of the

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Mother of God in Heaven. See, see, right ingeniously conceived."

"But to sketch such a thing is easier than to execute it," objected others. "Liefrink has never been able to do anything of that sort."

"Possibly he has made progress," remarked the burgomaster, "and in the end will do it more cheaply than a famous master."

This opinion appealed to many, but it would have been an unheard-of thing for such a sublime work to be committed to a simple Breisach child like Hans Liefrink, whom every one had known as a stupid youngster, and whom they had watched grow up without perceiving anything remarkable in him,—whom one had sneered at and despised. No, for the appearance of the thing, if nothing else, it was not to be thought of. So Hans Liefrink was irrevocably dismissed.

The affair, however, had at least one good result, for through it the gentlemen were influenced to send the drawings, hitherto received, to Albrecht Dürer, and to ask for his advice, so as to make sure that the work would fall into the right hands.

Maili wept bitterly when she heard how badly Hans had fared at the councilhouse,

but he did not despair. He hoped in Albrecht Dürer; and simultaneously with the communication from the common council went also a letter from Hans Liefrink to his great friend and teacher.

Weeks elapsed, alternating for the lovers in anxious suspense and sweet, stolen happiness (for the political battles and confusion of the year 1524 diverted Rupacher's attention from his daughter). They saw each other more freely than before and Marie lived and bloomed again quickly in the newly-breaking springtime of love. Hans was again occupying his deserted house and in his spare moments had carved himself a house door, which made a sensation in spite of all the depreciation of the local artist.

Dürer's answer was long in coming, for at that time the postal service was a poor thing, and the people were obliged to use more patience than at present when one reckons in days and hours, instead of months and weeks. Finally at the end of four weeks it came; but who can describe the astonishment of the assembled council when the letter was found to contain none other than the disdainfully rejected drawings of Hans Liefrink! Dürer wrote:— 'he could certainly recommend nothing more beautiful than this plan of his friend

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and pupil, Hans Liefrink, and he would guarantee its satisfactory execution. He could not understand how a city, harbouring such an artist in its midst, should turn to outside talent. Hans Liefrink was such an honorable and virtuous youth, and so great an artist, that the city of Breisach could be proud to call him its own, and it should do everything to hold him, for the world stood open to Liefrink and only his true loyalty to Breisach had induced him to return at all.'

A half hour after the arrival of this letter, a crowd, unheard of for Breisach, marched up the narrow street. Hans, who was at work in his studio, ran to the window to see what was happening. But—oh, marvelous! The procession stopped in front of his house and the brazen knocker in the carved lion's open mouth resounded loudly against the door.

Hans stepped out, and before him stood a deputation from the common council, in solemn array, backed by the inhabitants of all the streets leading from the council house.

"What do the gentlemen desire of me?" asked Hans in astonishment.

"Hans Liefrink," began the speaker of the deputation, "the honorable council of this city announces to you that it has al-

most unanimously decided to accept your application for the construction of the high altar for our Cathedral, without contract as to expense and with instructions to draw upon the clerk for whatever money you may need for procuring materials."

Hans clapped his hands for joy.

"Is it true? Is it possible? Tell me, noble sirs, whom have I to thank for this good fortune?"

"The council sends you this communication from Albrecht Dürer, which we wish to read aloud to you, here before all the people," said the spokesman, and with a loud voice he read Dürer's letter. Hans, in his joy, had not noticed that neighbor Ruppacher was spitefully closing his window shutters, as if the praise of the young artist offended his ears, and after the deputation had left him and he was alone, he dressed himself in his best, put a flower in his buttonhole, and went across to neighbor Ruppacher's, for now the moment had arrived when he might go a-wooing.

CHAPTER IV

THE CONDITION

MAILI opened the door for him; a soft cry of joyful alarm—a swift kiss—and she disappeared into her room, where she sank down, with beating heart, on her prie-dieu, entreating the Most Blessed Virgin for her aid. Hans, undaunted, entered Councilman Ruppacher's presence.

"Oho, what do you want?" cried Ruppacher, with flaming eye.

"First, I should like to thank you, Mr. Councillor, for the trust which the honorable Magistracy——"

"You don't need to thank me," interrupted Ruppacher surlily. "I have not given you my vote."

"So?" said Hans, startled. "That was not well done. What did you have against me?"

"What! you dare ask that? Have you not ogled my daughter and bewitched the heart of the girl, so that she will not become the wife of any honorable man, because you continually fill her mind?"

"Mr. Councillor," returned Hans quietly, "I know an honorable man, whose wife she will become, and I have come to bring him to you."

"Indeed! And who might that be?"

"I, Mr. Councillor."

Ruppacher laughed loudly.

"You? Has it come to this? Does the beggar child dare——"

"Mr. Councillor!" retorted Hans angrily, "I was and am no beggar child. I was poor, but the man has yet to appear who can say that he has ever given Hans a heller. My father supported us with his plaque-carving and after his death my mother made her own and my way by the labor of her hands. In my whole life, the only things which I have received as a gift, were the knife and the purse from Kaiser Max, and I did not beg for those. The Kaiser gave them to me because the great man, whose eye penetrated into human souls with a divine comprehension, recognized the ambition of the poor boy. It was no idle alms, idly received, and idly wasted—I have labored with my knife, and the golden nest-egg I have saved and kept, until I could invest it in the better capital of my artistic education, and, truly, it has borne interest. I am no beggar, Mr. Councillor, and do not deserve such insult."

"Oh, you do not deserve it?" said Ruppacher, somewhat more calmly. "Well, where then have you your riches? Show them to me and then we will speak further."

"Here I have them, Mr. Councillor."

Hans pointed to his head and his hand.

"Do you mock me, fellow?" shrieked Ruppacher furiously.

"No, Mr. Councillor, I only say to you that a thinking head and an industrious hand are riches, for through my head and my hand originate the works which will bring me fortune—and, I assure you, there is much money value there, which in time will come to light."

"And am I to believe in such illusions, and give my daughter to a man who has seven doves on his roof and none in his hand?"

"Mr. Councillor, I have plenty for myself and my wife for the next two years, and through the work in the Cathedral I am a made man——"

"For two years, and then?"

"Then new orders will come——"

"So—then you think the world has nothing to do but to adorn itself with your scrolls? Hard times are coming when there will be no money for such plunder. If you were even an honest tailor or cob-

bler—every one needs clothes and shoes—but one who pursues such an unprofitable art as yours in our times can only be classed with bear tamers and strolling fiddlers—and the councillor's beautiful daughter could play the lute on the streets, I suppose. Oh, yes, that would be a fine joke!"

Hans Liefrink trembled with anger, but for Maili's sake he controlled himself and answered modestly, "You do not know me, Mr. Councillor. I was a haughty chap, who always had his head in the air, but that is no longer so. I have struggled in the world, and have learned that art must go after bread, if the artist is not to come to grief. I have also learned the handicraft of my art, in order to live, and if it be necessary I shall carve tavern signboards and household furniture, for those will always be needed. Your daughter shall not hunger, even if her wealthy father disinherits her, and as soon as better times come, when even here the love for the beautiful and the fine will be newly-awakened, then Hans Liefrink will be allowed to be an artist again."

"Well, and that is something great, I suppose, to be an artist!" sneered Rupacher. "What do you think, then, you ape, that I understand by an artist? Id-

lers you are, who are too lazy to work, and too stupid to fill an ordinary station in life. Hypocrites and star-gazers you are, who carry around in your idle heads nothing but vain dreams and put them into the heads of others. Any one who holds to custom and order, rejects such adventurous, stray rabble, in order that it may not seduce with its jugglery others who are still rooted in the soil of duty and decency.”

“Lord God, grant me patience!” cried Hans, and started back in glowing rage. “Man, you are sacred to me as the father of your daughter, otherwise I would avenge differently the insult that you have offered me. My God, under what men must I bow, fight with what prejudices! Outside, there lies a whole alluring world, laughing in the first sunbeams of the awakening ideas of the beautiful—every one who thinks and feels crowds jubilantly toward the newly rising constellation; the humanists, the artists, all unite in joyous creation, and the laity, blinded by the unaccustomed brilliancy, sink at their feet, and say ‘lead us.’ An emperor has held the ladder on which an Albrecht Dürer painted—and a councilman of Breisach, whose dust may the winds scatter, mistreats his favorite pupil like a scamp! Out there

I enjoyed all the honors of my calling, and here in this dark corner I must let myself be trampled upon, because I bring in a ray, from that lighter world which pains your blinded eyes—all because I am an artist!”

“Then go, go again into your bright hell, which you call the world, you impudent fellow,” thundered Ruppacher. “Why did you not remain where you were; why have you stooped so low as to seek out our dark corner?”

“Because I love your daughter, Mr. Ruppacher, love her so devotedly that to me no sacrifice is too great for her.”

“And did you really believe, you self-sacrificing man, that a Ruppacher would sink so low as to give his daughter to an *artist*?”

“Yes, Mr. Ruppacher, after the distinction that the artist enjoyed outside, I could think that.”

“I don’t care at all how it is outside; and if it pleased the Kaiser to hold the ladder for Dürer ten times over—or, indeed, to black his shoes—I would still maintain that which is the custom here in this country, and I tell you that as little as you could bring into the Cathedral an altar which is higher than the Cathedral itself, just so little will you bring into your home

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a wife who stands as much higher than you, as my daughter."

"Mr. Councillor, are those your final words?"

Ruppacher raised a sneering laugh.

"Carve me an altar which is higher than the church in which it stands, then you shall have my daughter—no sooner, so help me God!"

A heart-breaking cry rang out from the adjoining room. Ruppacher went over and opened it. Maili lay unconscious behind the door. Hans hastened up to her but Ruppacher raised his arm against him.

"Take yourself away from here, or—I will stamp your disgrace into your face."

For a moment it seemed to the youth as if the holy knife which an emperor had given him, with which to become an artist, leaped suddenly in his pocket. He fought such an inner fight that the sweat-drops dripped from his brow, but the knife remained in his pocket—he had conquered himself. He bowed his head silently and left. The sun, glowing hot, burned upon the top of his head as he stepped out. He was dizzy. The blood hammered in his temples and he had to lean on the door-posts for a moment in order not to fall. Then he hurried on, not to his house, but

up to the Cathedral, to his old friend, the Kaiser-tree.

It was a divinely beautiful noon-day—shadowless the world lay before him, the perpendicular sunbeams banishing all darkness. Brightness and splendor shone down from the blue-arched firmament, shone back from the green earth, from the rushing stream. Like an enchanted castle, the proud fortress of Sponeck contrasted with the golden background and the Rhine's strong breakers washed the rugged cliff, which served it as a footstool, as a passionate lover throws himself at the feet of his beloved. Over on the other side Alsatian children were playing and trying to throw stones across. It was pure German blood for at that time Alsace did not suspect that it would ever cease to be German, and that three hundred years later, instead of pebbles, it would throw cannon balls across to keep from being German again. With longing gaze Hans looked in the direction of Strassburg, which was then a refuge for German art and culture. But the splendor of the clear heaven hurt him; Nature, beaming and beautiful, seemed to him like a heartless friend, who adorns herself while her companion weeps. He sat down in the niche under the rose-tree, where the benignant shade of the dead

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Kaiser always ruled, where every rose had bloomed under his own and Maili's kisses; thither he was always driven, there he had always found relief.

But what relief could come to him now? Could the tree tear itself up by the roots and go to Ruppacher to intercede for him? Could the Kaiser, who in his lifetime had not come, appear after death to help him? And even if the tree should raise itself out of the ground, and even if the Kaiser should rise from the grave, and even if Ruppacher's heart should soften—how would it help him? Ruppacher himself could not give him his daughter now, for he had taken a vow that he should have her only if he made an altar higher than the church in which it stood. This was certainly impossible—a miracle would have to come to pass to help him, and God did not perform miracles for as unimportant a human being as he was.

For him and Maili there was no rescue, no hope. Again and again he saw before him that deathly pale, beloved maiden whom he might not touch, and pain, longing and rage forced hot irrepressible tears from the strong man. He buried his sweat-covered brow in his hands and, helpless as a child, he sobbed as he had years ago, "My Kaiser, my Kaiser, why did you die?"

But this time Maili was not there to tell him that God was near him, and no artist's vision comforted him with proud hopes, as at that time. Everything remained quiet around him; only a rosechafer flew humming among the roses, and high in the air a jay screamed.

Suddenly something gave him a rough blow in the back.

As he started up and looked around, it seemed to him that the Kaiser must be standing behind him; but it was not the ghostly hand of the dead Kaiser which had touched him. The little rose tree had finally through its own strength torn itself loose from the back of the niche in which Maili had bound it, and, in springing up so quickly, had struck against Hans.

There it stood, bolt upright, jutting far out over the arch, and now for the first time he saw how much higher the little tree already was than the niche in which it had stood. Like lightning, a thought shot through the brain of poor Hans.

A short reflection, a cry of triumph:

"Lord, my God, Thou art great, even in the smallest things, and Thy wonders still are accomplished!"

What had the little tree taught him?

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What was it that threw him so suddenly to his knees, embracing and kissing the rough trunk of the Kaiser-tree as if mad with joy?

CHAPTER V

FULFILLMENT

HANS did not see Maili any more. Father Ruppacher understood that he could no longer keep watch of the girl, so he took her, himself, to the convent at Marinaeu, that she might exchange neither word nor glance with her beloved. The confinement of the young prisoner was not so strict, however, but what a greeting, a song and a hope-awakening word penetrated to her from Hans Liefrink.

Meanwhile, he also lived like a hermit in a cell. From the first break of day until far into the night, he worked without rest or repose, and no entreaties or remonstrances could induce him to show his work to one unbidden. "It was not in his contract," he replied to every request that had this in view, and hence the curiosity of the Breisach people rose to the highest pitch.

Two long years were gone, the first Reformation struggles and many hard days had passed over Breisach, but Hans had

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allowed himself to be turned aside by nothing. Unwearied he had worked on, without looking to the right or the left, and finally in the summer of 1526 he appeared at the council house and declared his work finished.

Now there was great commotion in Breisach. The Cathedral was locked for three days while the altar was being installed. Hundreds of the curious surrounded Hans Liefrink's house hoping to spy out some of the work, but the single pieces came out of the studio closely wrapped and the suspense increased more and more.

The fourth day was the Feast of the Assumption, and on this day the altar was to be dedicated. In the early dawn, an immense throng was already surging up the mountain to the reopened house of God. The great bell resounded joyfully, far over the Rhine and the villages. In a huge procession, on foot and by wagon, the country people streamed from the Kaiserstuhl and across from Alsace in order to see the wonderful work concerning which there had been so much talk for two years.

Hans Liefrink had been in the church since daybreak. Once again he examined his work with critical eyes. As the great bell rang over his head, calling the faith-

ful together, a slight trembling seized his tall, slender figure. He took off his little cap and with folded hands, said, "Lord, now bless Thou my labor."

It was a brief prayer, but whosoever has labored for years, by the sweat of his brow, for his whole future, will know what were the feelings of Hans Liefrink at these few words, and our Lord God knew also.

Now the crowd streamed in, and the trying moment was at hand in which the artist submitted the work of his solitary days and nights to publicity. Hans Liefrink cast one last look upon his creation, then disappeared, and, in anxious suspense, awaited the impression which it should make upon the assembled people. The morning sun threw its rays directly upon the altar and a cry of astonishment, of joy, and of admiration resounded from the high vault.

There it stood before their eyes, the entire heavenly glory, palpable, and of most original design. God, Father and Son; between them Mary, her arms crossed over her breast, bowing her head humbly beneath the crown which the Father and Son held up over her. A veritable tempest of joy seemed to blow through the whole heavens, the garments of the celestials fluttered as in the storm. Was that really

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wood, hard, unyielding wood that seemed so flexible? Was it possible to make the inanimate live? Did those forms move? And the angel hosts which sang Hallelujah in a wild chorus! And all of the Saints, each so perfectly lifelike, and yet so typical! All the figures life-size, and the whole entwined and crowned by thick tendrils of artificial foliage, the central part of which, with mighty aspiration, climbed even to the arch of the choir. The unpracticed eyes of the simple people could not at once compass all the splendor that was to be seen there. Not one of those who were present had ever seen such a masterpiece, and the innocent souls, with child-like awe, received into themselves the never-dreamed-of magic of art.

The high mass began. Such a mass had never been celebrated as long as one could remember. Thrills of devotion passed through the church. Never before had the people stood face to face with heaven—how they must have prayed! And when the sanctus bell announced the consecration, not one dared to look up—they thought, all of them, that the Saviour there must be living and step down from his frame.

When the divine service was over, every one pushed irrepressibly forward to see

the master who had conceived the work. The sexton was dispatched to hunt for Hans Liefrink. The latter stepped out from behind the altar, modest and deeply moved, but so handsome and so full of unconscious, genuine pride, that every eye hung on him enraptured. The burgomaster who had spoken the first good word for him in the council stepped up to him, and, shaking his hand, congratulated him; the whole council followed his example, with the exception of Ruppacher, who, not having been able to escape through the crush, was gloomily leaning against a pillar. His daughter had been allowed to leave the restraint of the cloister for this festive occasion and stood at full height beside him, paler than ever, but with a glorified expression on her charming face.

"Do you not find that the Ruppacher girl is very like the holy Mother of God up there?" whispered one to another.

"Yes, that is true."

"And God, the Father, is like Kaiser Max!" said an old man. "Exactly like that he looked."

And like wildfire it went through the ranks that Liefrink had portrayed Marie Ruppacher and Kaiser Max.

"Yes, dear friends," said Hans quietly and distinctly, "I did that, because I know

of nothing more beautiful on the earth than Kaiser Max and Jungfrau Ruppacher. God has created man in His image, and the artist who is to depict the Creator has the right to copy those who, he thinks, are the most like Him."

"Well said," was heard on all sides.

"Master Liefrink, you will yet be in the common council, that I prophesy," said the burgomaster.

Hans now approached with swift steps the spot where Ruppacher was vainly trying to draw his daughter away with him.

"Stop, Master Ruppacher," he cried in a firm voice. "I have still something to say to you and you must hear me. Two years ago you imposed upon me a strange condition, under which alone you would give me your daughter as my wife. Do you remember?"

Ruppacher was disdainfully silent. Hans continued:

"You demanded what seemed impossible, that I should carve an altar which was higher than the church in which it stood—and you took a holy vow that then I should have your daughter. Now, Master Ruppacher, look above you. The altar here is exactly a foot higher than the church, yet it stands within it—I have only bent the top over."

Ruppacher looked up and paled—he had not thought of that.

A movement of applause went through the church.

“So, Mr. Councillor,” continued Hans quietly, “I have fulfilled my condition! Now fulfill your oath and give me your daughter as wife!”

Ruppacher was as if thunderstruck. He became faint and the people had to support him; but his was a strong nature and he recovered himself quickly. He was not a man to play with oaths. Hans Liefrink had taken him at his word in a way which no man could foresee; that word must indeed be kept, and with decency and dignity. A councilman could not give offense before all the people.

A long pause ensued. Hans waited patiently. Finally Ruppacher made his way through the crowd and proudly led his daughter to the young man.

“A Ruppacher has never yet broken his oath. There you have my child, as I have sworn,” he said drily.

“Marie, my wife!” cried Hans joyfully, opening his arms to the trembling girl.

Who can describe the look with which Maili, after seven years’ hoping and waiting, sank into the arms of her betrothed!

He had to hold her or she would have fallen on her knees before him. They held each other in a silent embrace. Fulfillment, that beautiful daughter of heaven, had descended to them, and overhead the carved Mary and the deified Kaiser Max smiled friendlily upon them, while all those present rejoiced with them.

Several young men ran out, hastily broke twigs from the little rose tree and wove two wreaths for the bridal pair. Hans, however, took off his crown and laid it upon the altar.

"Let these roses be God's. Through them He has saved me. See, Marie," he whispered and pointed upward toward the bent top of the altar, "that is what the little Kaiser-tree taught me. May it teach you, Mr. Councillor, that one can bow oneself, and yet be greater than those to whom he bends."

Three weeks later Hans and Maili were married before the same altar. It was a more splendid wedding than Breisach had ever seen. The grateful city had paid Hans for his work a sum which was a small fortune for those times, and the common council insisted upon furnishing the wedding besides.

Father Ruppacher, however, was not so vexed as one might have supposed, for he

had acquired respect for the "profitless arts" of his son-in-law.

This is the story told by the sexton at Breisach, which penetrated my soul with its rose fragrance and its pious simplicity, as I was watching, one dark, stormy night, the wild battle around our frontiers. In the very same night the cannons became mute. While I was climbing down the mountain in the darkness, through bushes and brambles, they ceased. The next morning came the news of New Breisach's surrender. Lovely old Breisach with its historical memories and the venerable Cathedral was saved. Now it is ended, the holiest war that ever was fought. There are again German children, who throw pebbles across the Rhine from the Alsatian shore; even if they themselves do not know and feel it, still they are German. We here in Breisgau, who have always clung to the old Kaiser tradition, and who, like the hero of this tale, have anxiously waited so long for a Kaiser, do not now need to lament, "The Kaiser does not come any more." We rejoice to-day, from a full heart, "The Kaiser is once more here!"

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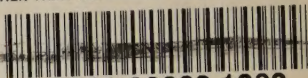
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